


Author's Response to Letter to Editor on "Characteristics and Outcomes of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus Patients Admitted to an Intensive Care Unit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia"

Journal of Intensive Care Medicine
 © The Author(s) 2015
 Reprints and permission:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
 DOI: 10.1177/0885066615598721
jic.sagepub.com


Ali S. Wahla, MD¹

I agree with Dr Wiwanitkit that patients with Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS CoV) often present with acute respiratory illness that can progress to respiratory failure, with worse outcome in patients with comorbid conditions. This has also been confirmed by other investigators.¹ Although early diagnosis remains important and combination therapy with interferon α -2b combined with ribavirin has been shown to improve survival at 14 days, however, this effect was not noted at 28 days.^{2,3} Despite promise from invitro studies, the mainstay of treatment remains supportive. Having said that, our practice remains to have a low threshold to test patients with symptoms for MERS CoV and to treat patients with MERS-CoV with combination therapy as soon as possible. In Saudi Arabia, as of May 30, 2015, there have been 1016 cases reported with 447 deaths (44% mortality).¹ Given the relatively high mortality, emphasis should remain on preventing human to human transmission, especially among health care workers.

However, as the recent experience from South Korea shows controlling the spread of MERS CoV remains challenging even for developed nations.

References

1. Zumla A, Hui DS, Perlman S. Middle East respiratory syndrome [published online June 3, 2015]. *Lancet*. 2015;pii: S0140-6736(15) 60454-8.
2. Ziebeck F, Weber M, Eickmann M, et al. Human cell tropism and innate immune system interactions of human respiratory coronavirus EMC compared to those of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus. *J Virol*. 2013;87(9):5300-5304.
3. Al-Tawfiq JA, Momattin H, Dib J, Memish ZA. Ribavirin and interferon therapy in patients infected with the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus: an observational study. *Int J Infect Dis*. 2014;20:42-46.

¹ Respiratory and Critical Care Institute, Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Received June 29, 2015. Accepted for publication July 10, 2015.

Corresponding Author:

Ali S. Wahla, Respiratory and Critical Care Institute, Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
 Email: aliwahla@hotmail.com